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From: D J R Hill
 Constitutional and Political Division
 20 February 1998

cc PS/Secretary of State (B&L)
 PS/Mr Murphy (B&L)
 PS/Mr Ingram (B&L)
 PS/PUS (B&L)
 PS/Mr Semple
 Mr Thomas
 Mr Steele
 Mr Stephens
 Mr Bell
 Mr Leach
 Mr McCusker
 Mr Woods
 Mr Brooker
 Mr Maccabe
 Mr Priestly
 Mr Beeton
 Mr Ferguson
 Mr Warner
 Mr Whysall
 Mr Johnston
 Ms Mapstone
 Mr Fergusson, RID
 Mr Clarke, Dublin
 Mr Sanderson, Cabinet Office
 Mr Holmes, No 10

Prime minister
To see. A pathetic
performance by
Andrews (but who
doesn't sound much
better). Who killed
people away?

✓ PB
AC

File
23/2

29/2

FILE NOTE

SINN FEIN RECEIVE THE DETERMINATION, 20 FEBRUARY

The Secretary of State and Mr Andrews, accompanied by Mr Murphy and two or three officials on each side, met the seven strong Sinn Fein Executive Committee at Castle Buildings at 3 pm today to hand over the text of the two Governments' Determination.

Gerry Adams commented that the media knew in advance that Sinn Fein were to be excluded until 9 March. He then said, without passion, that the expulsion of Sinn Fein was unjust, inconsistent, improper under the Talks Rules of Procedure and would only serve to damage

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the peace process. The indictment still had not been substantiated. He informed the Secretary of State and Mr Andrews that he would be publicly asking for meetings with the Prime Minister and the Taoiseach.

In a somewhat surreal intervention, Mr Andrews said he would be proud to convey that message: he knew the Taoiseach intended that the Irish Government should keep in touch with Sinn Fein at political and official level and felt that a meeting with the Taoiseach "shouldn't be a problem". (Although he subsequently said that a response to the request would be a matter for the Taoiseach's judgement.) He went on to express his personal sorrow, and that of his Government, at the turn of events and his great appreciation for the role which Mr Adams and Mr McGuinness had played in the peace process. As the Talks were expected to reach the "end game" within six weeks, he "hoped" that Sinn Fein would be back in on the due date.

Gerry Adams expressed his appreciation for these sentiments, commenting that 175,000 electors in Ireland had effectively been disenfranchised by the two Governments' action. He said there was no point in prolonging matters and sought to bring the meeting to a close.

The Secretary of State concurred with Mr Andrews that it was in some respects a sad day and said that HMG too intended to keep open political and official channels to Sinn Fein.

That prompted a rather harder edged response from Gerry Adams who made it explicitly clear that Sinn Fein would not be in touch with the Government at any level below Prime Minister and would certainly not be going through a charade of meetings with officials and video-

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conferences with Mr Murphy (a reference to his meeting with the UDP which, for purely logistical reasons, was held on the video link). He went on to say that whatever Sinn Fein might try to do, "the system" was capable of screwing things up. The police and army presence on the streets was already building up, as they had seen when passing Short Strand on the way in. The Secretary of State had a responsibility not to make life more difficult but would have her work cut out to control "the people in uniforms" just as Sinn Fein would have its work cut out in trying to hold back young people who saw no evidence of change in Northern Ireland's society. [This theme of securocrats dictating the Government's agenda was played more explicitly in the subsequent Sinn Fein press conference.]

Martin McGuinness had the last, slightly ominous, word: the two Governments should realise that they had dealt a devastating blow to Sinn Fein's peace strategy. They would keep working at it. But they needed a "proper" peace process [ie, presumably, one which wouldn't mean they could be excluded on account of IRA activity].

Signed

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